

Isle of Wight, 2.ii.1995 (S.A. Knill-Jones, *Ent. Rec.* **107**: 252). The author remarks that this “supports further evidence that this species hibernates in this country during mild winters”. It is noteworthy that in the case of Mr Lewis's sighting, much of the winter preceding the butterfly's appearance had been anything but mild, reinforcing the conclusion just stated and suggesting that *V. atalanta* can tolerate a greater degree of winter cold than has usually been supposed. However, C.W. Plant (1987, *The Butterflies of the London Area*: 106) expresses the opposite view, that “apart from isolated incidents in the West Country, it is thought to be quite unable to survive the British winters . . .”, and indeed it is true that instances such as the two above do not of themselves prove resumption of normal activity in the spring.—A.A. ALLEN, 49 Montcalm Road, Charlton, London SE7 8QG.

### **Red Admirals *Vanessa atalanta* (L.) (Lep.: Nymphalidae) at sugar by day**

At my home address in Banffshire, a line of 24 fenceposts bordering a marsh with scrub is kept permanently sugared between early spring and late autumn. When present, Red Admirals regularly feed at this sugar in the daytime, especially in autumn. Numerous instances include six at once on 10.x.1994, and eight on 16.viii.1995. On the latter date there was sunlit *Buddleia* in full bloom only a few metres away.

As the sugar is spread on the north side of the posts, and some of the posts themselves are overhung by trees, the Red Admirals often have to feed in the shade. They do so, with closed wings, even when the weather is fairly cool. Generally, there is only one butterfly per post, with some hint of territoriality or guarding if another intrudes. Occasionally, one roosts overnight on its fencepost.

There are numerous references in the literature to Red Admirals partaking of over-ripe fruit or sap from wounded trees, but in an admittedly casual search I could find no reference to them coming to sugar. Perhaps few observers check their's during the daytime? No other species of butterfly has yet been seen at sugar at this site, but afternoon visits by the noctuids *Oligia fasciuncula* and *Celaena haworthii* are not uncommon.—ROY LEVERTON, Whitewalls, Ordiquhill, Cornhill, Banffshire AB45 2HS.

### **The Peacock butterfly *Inachis io* (L.) (Lep. Nymphalidae) in Shetland**

Although not always thought of as a migrant, the Peacock *Inachis io* spends most of its adult life on the move. According to Baker (1984, in Vane-Wright & Ackery (Eds.) *The Biology of Butterflies*), virtually all individuals migrate steadily through their lifetime, alternating cross-country travel with bouts of feeding, ovipositing, territoriality and basking. Nevertheless, the species is obviously not normally as much a migrant as its famous relatives,

the Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta* (L.) and Painted Lady *Cynthia cardui* (L.) both of which must migrate to southern wintering areas to survive. In contrast, the Peacock can successfully overwinter in northern areas and it does not normally wander much outside its established range. In Shetland for example, whereas the Red Admiral is an annual migrant and the Painted Lady is almost as common, the Peacock is a rare vagrant, although there have been notable influxes in both 1994 and 1995.

To date there are 43 records for which details have been traced, the first an unpublished record on an unknown date at Houbie on Fetlar in 1961 (BRC Data). Another was seen near Skaw on Unst in late August 1969 (Rushton, 1971. *Ent. Rec.* **83**: 397).

The first influx into Shetland occurred in 1975 with eight records collected and published by Kinnear (1976, *Ent. Gazette* **27**: 137). These were mainly in August at Bluemull on Unst on 4th, Fetlar on 9th, Cunningsburgh on 10th, Foula on 11th, Skerries on 24th and Mid Yell on 25th with later records at Sumburgh Head on 3 September and Burravoe on 1 November. A record of one flying in sunshine at Herra on Yell on 6 January 1976 (A. Gear) was not published by Kinnear but obviously relates to an individual from the 1975 influx attempting to overwinter.

Over the next 15 years the species returned to extreme rarity with the only records being singles on Fair Isle on 14 and 28 August 1983 (Fair Isle Bird Observatory (FIBO)) which given the mobility of this species presumably related to different individuals.

Since 1991 the species has been annual. One was found dead inside a partly built building at Scalloway on 28 November 1991 (Dalziel, 1992. *Shetland Naturalist* **1**: 56), another was seen at Frakkafeld near Lerwick on 25 May 1992 (P. Barry) and a third was found hibernating amongst imported timber in Lerwick in March 1993 (*per* J. Blackadder).

In 1994 there was an influx involving 13 individuals. A very early record came from Burravoe on Yell on 4 July (the late C. Guy). The main influx was in August with two at Spiggie in mid-month (J. Morton) and singles on Fetlar on 15th (RSPB), Grutness (J. Clifton), Scatness (H. Harrop) and Burravoe, Yell (*per* C. Guy) on 17th, Noss NNR on 21st with the same individual on Bressay on 22nd (SNH), Sumburgh Hotel on 22nd (A. McCall), Foula from 22nd until 2 September (S. Gear) and a new individual on Noss NNR on 30th (SNH). There was a straggler at Eswick on 7 September (T. Rogers) and another found dead inside a building at Haroldswick in early December (J. Burgess).

There were even more records in 1995 involving about 15 individuals. The first was at Scalloway on 29 May (*per* J. McKee) with another early record at Spiggie in early July (J. Morton) and a third on Fair Isle on 16 July (FIBO). At the end of July there were singles on Fair Isle (FIBO) and Whalsay (K. Simpson) on 27th (the latter until 1 August), at Baltasound on

29th (M. Pennington) and at Scalloway on an unknown date (*per* J. McKee). Further butterflies appeared in August with two on Fair Isle on 9th (FIBO) and singles at Noness on about the 10th (H. Towll), Fetlar on 12th and 18th (D. Suddaby), Baltasound on 17th (M. Pennington), Fair Isle on 17th and 18th (FIBO) and Noss NNR on 18th and 30th (SNH).

At least one of these records, in 1993, obviously refers to an insect brought in by man, while the same could apply to the 1991 record, although it could have arrived naturally and chosen the half-built building as a hibernation site because of its easy access. Most of the rest of the records involve obvious and marked influxes – nine in 1975/76, 13 in 1994 and 15 in 1995. Excluding these influxes and the possibility of imported individuals, there are only four other records (1961, 1969, 1983 and 1992). However, it is highly probable that other records have either gone unrecorded or have not been traced – for example Sheila Gear on Foula believes she has seen three on the island over the years, although details of only two have been traced and included above.

The great majority of Shetland records are of second brood adults recorded between mid-July and early September. In all 33 of the 42 dated records fall in this period. Four records fall between 1 November and 6 January and obviously involve individuals attempting to hibernate in Shetland. The sole March record was probably imported while hibernating. Spring records are rare, suggesting successful hibernation does not occur, with singles on 25 May 1992 and 29 May 1995. The 1992 record appeared during an obvious immigration of Red Admirals, while the three other regularly recorded Shetland vanessids were all recorded on the same day as the 1995 record. The two remaining records, in early July in 1994 and 1995 are also probably best considered as late spring migrants as they are too early to be part of the summer brood.

In Scotland the Peacock is largely restricted to the south of the country with most records north of the central belt concerning migrants or wanderers (Thomson, G., 1980. *The Butterflies of Scotland*. Croon Helm). Records in the far north of Scotland are very few. In Orkney there was only one certain record, two in 1939 (Lorimer, R.I., 1983. *The Lepidoptera of the Orkney Islands*. Classey), prior to an influx of six in 1994, with several more in 1995 (S. Gauld and M. Gray, *pers. comm.*). The 1994 influx also reached Faroe, where there were five in 1994 (S. Kaaber, *pers. comm.*). My thanks are extended to all the recorders who are credited where appropriate.

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